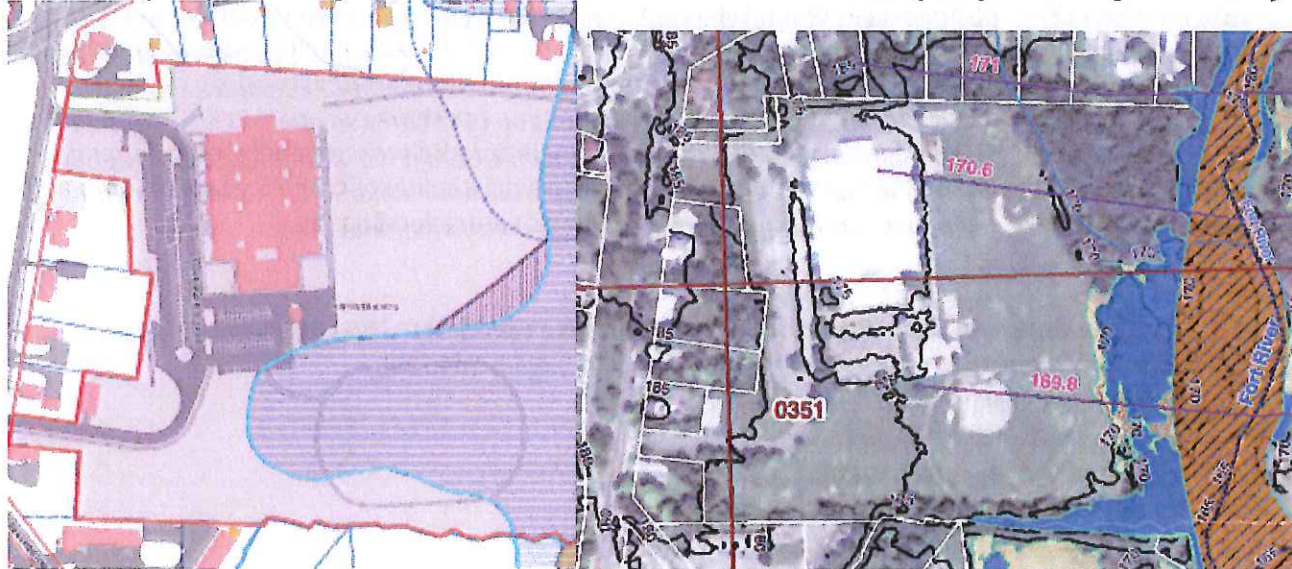


What is the NEW information?**1. Amherst may submit a new Statement of Interest (an application) in 2017.**

A prior communication from Dr. Morris had indicated that we would have to wait until 2018 to re-apply to the MSBA, but this is not the case. On December 9, 2016 the MSBA confirmed that if our School District withdraws the current project in time for the MSBA Board to remove it from the pipeline at its February meeting, we can submit an SOI for a different project before the April 2017 deadline. The significance of this new information is that **the possibility of getting back into the funding pipeline is at least one year sooner than believed.**

**2. There may be much greater flexibility for building options at the Fort River site.**

FEMA has been updating its maps using newer, more accurate topographic data from much improved digital imaging modalities and has determined that the 100 year floodplain does not, in fact, extend to the parking lot next to the current school. The District's consultants were using maps from 1983 when they concluded that options for school construction at Fort River were essentially limited to the existing footprint. This new information means that building options at the Fort River campus are now much more flexible and extensive and may include staged construction, swing space, and other building designs. In addition, the land is essentially flat, is on a primary north-south road, and near two major east-west arteries.

**Amherst Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) Revision****1983 data (100 year floodplain in grey)****2016 data (100 year floodplain in blue)**

Preliminary Design Report p. 252

<https://www.amherstma.gov/documentcenter/view/35530>

What information is NOT new?

**1. The MSBA does not permit changing to a different project after a failed vote on the current project.** This was known at the time of the vote in Town Meeting.

At no point did those speaking against the proposal assert in Town Meeting – or even suggest – that the Town was free to draft (and subsequently vote on) a different proposal to be submitted to the MSBA in the current funding cycle. Nevertheless, the Town and School Committee sought an extension in order to change the proposal, which the MSBA, unsurprisingly, denied.

**2. Town Meeting was aware in November that many teachers support getting a new building as soon as possible.**

Both opponents and proponents of the Article spoke at Town Meeting about teachers' opinions. Several speakers referenced the anonymous survey commissioned by the School Committee showing that the grade configuration that is inextricably linked to the proposal was the **least** favored option of both educators and parents. Dr. Morris spoke at length about how dozens of current and retired teachers now support the plan, Ms. Appy reported that "teachers now overwhelmingly support the plan because they know they need new buildings", and Principal Yaffe spoke in support of the project.

The results of the January 2016 survey remain the only anonymously obtained evidence of parent and teacher opinion when other options were still on the table; the results clearly favored maintaining K-6 schools. **There has not been a subsequent survey** (as contrasted with a "petition") **to assess the degree of support of teachers and parents of all three elementary schools, their understanding of the consequences of approval or rejection of the plan, or the reasons for their preferences.** We do not doubt that all employees of the schools want to have improved facilities and we wholeheartedly support them in that objective. Our position is that we must approach this with the next 50 or 75 years in mind and not proceed now with a very expensive, problematic, inflexible and controversial plan.

**3. Nearly 7000 voters and over 100 Town Meeting members voted NO** in November for very good reasons. Neither the plan nor the reasons to oppose it have changed, including:

- Pedagogical concerns
- transportation and traffic problems
- loss of outdoor play space
- building design and lack of flexibility
- town and individual financial implications
- poor process leading to poor outcome
- burdens on families, particularly of more modest means



Debunking some myths**1. The proposed building design is NOT flexible**

The building design, which cannot be modified significantly at this point in the process, does not have enough appropriately sized rooms, necessary plumbing or suitable outdoor play structures for younger students. **The project architects themselves clearly stated that renovating a grade 2-6 structure to accommodate K-6 would not be easy or inexpensive.**

In addition, because this project is partially funded by the MSBA for a specific grade configuration, there may be contractual limitations on our ability to change this and there may be **stipulations and financial penalties for doing so**

**2. The data suggests a much better outlook for future MSBA funding**

An analysis of all applications to the MSBA suggests that **schools, particularly those with needs similar to Wildwood or Fort, have a very good chance of being accepted into the pipeline.** In addition, the history of other towns that have had failed votes reveals a similar record of success. Carver, Hopkinton, and Granby went from re-application to successful vote in 2-4 years. Finally, almost 40 towns have had two major projects funded by the MSBA an average of 4 years apart (for example, Plymouth North HS, accepted in 2008 for \$84 million; Plymouth South HS, accepted in 2012 for \$108 million). The argument for accepting this proposal, even while acknowledging how problematic it is, because it is unlikely to come again soon is not supported by a preponderance of the evidence.

**3. The Wildwood site provides no flexibility if the town grows**

If enrollment increases in the future, the building design allows for additions at the both ends of the building. However, since one of the play structures is very near one end and the bus loop is very near the other, this would involve further reductions of the scant play space and possible revision of the roadways and/or walkways. More concerning, though, is that should enrollment increase sometime over the anticipated 50+ year life of the building, **the solution will be to increase the size of an already over-large building and large student body on a site that is straining to accommodate the initial enrollment.**

**4. There are other, better ways to expand preschool opportunities**

The MSBA only prohibits funding for facilities restricted to preschool only. Buildings that house preschool in addition to other grades *are* eligible for state funding, such as were recently funded for Carver and Dedham and many others. **The current proposal is NOT the only way to increase Pre-K opportunities in Town; this CAN be accomplished with state funding as part of a PreK-6 school project in a different round of funding.** Families are in need of *full* day preschool at a location closer to their home and other children. Finally, the funding source for any increased slots, transportation, and renovation associated with the proposal has been promised out of theoretical savings that may or may not be realized.

### 5. Claims of the environmental friendliness of new building have been overstated

The District and its consultants have touted the fact that the proposed building meets the requirements for LEED silver certification. In fact, this level of certification is the **second lowest certification possible** and this design barely meets those goals.

\*This project scores particularly poorly in terms of

**Location and Transportation (project received 3 out of 15 points)**

The intent of this criterion is "to avoid development on inappropriate sites, to reduce vehicle distance traveled, and to enhance livability and improve human health by encouraging daily physical activity". (2017 U.S. Green Building Council)

**Energy and Atmosphere (project received 12 out of 31 points)**

This rates optimization of energy performance (6 out of 16 points) and renewable energy production (0 out of 3 points)

**Materials and Resources (project received 5 out of 13 points)**

One criterion here "encourages adaptive reuse and optimization of the

|                    |           |        |      |    |          |    |     |
|--------------------|-----------|--------|------|----|----------|----|-----|
| Points<br>Required | 40        | 50     | 60   | 70 | 80       | 90 | 100 |
| LEED<br>Status     | Certified | Silver | Gold |    | Platinum |    |     |



Proposal

environmental performance of products and materials" (0 out of 5 points)

Any future building option (both renovation and new construction) would include a more efficient envelope (windows, doors), improvements in air quality, energy efficient HVAC, and water efficiency. A design with different priorities might also incorporate alternative energy sources (e.g., ground or air sourced heat pumps) and solar that is guaranteed, not contingent upon construction costs coming in lower than projected.

\*from LEED-S scorecard, Schematic Design Report, p. 103